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WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

June 11, 2009 Vol. 51, No. 23 50¢

UAW concessions don't save jobs

GM bankruptcy a disaster for workers

By Martha Grevatt

On June 1 General Motors—a hundred-year-old company that for decades was the world's largest—filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. This follows months of speculation, where "possible" became "50-50," which then became "more probable than not." Now the world is witnessing the downfall of a giant that still employs a quarter-million workers.

Knowing that Chapter 11 was all but inevitable, members of the United Auto Workers nevertheless voted three-to-one in favor of drastic contract concessions. The fear was put in their heads that if the concessions were rejected, GM would instead file a Chapter 13 bankruptcy and liquidate the company, eliminating everybody's jobs. The contract modifications for GM mirror those at Chrysler; workers have given up in wages and benefits what it took decades of struggle to achieve.

Workers voted knowing that GM would be closing or idling 14 plants and cutting 21,000 jobs by the end of next year. None of them knew then, however, if the 14 plants to be shut included theirs. Michigan will take a beating with seven plants going down; the other seven include two in Ohio and one each in Tennessee, Delaware, Indiana, Virginia and New York. Three parts warehouses in Massachusetts, Ohio and Florida will also close.

These 14 plants are among the "bad assets" to be left behind when a new GM emerges from bankruptcy. They are covered by the 2007 contract between the UAW and GM in which major concessions were traded for a bogus promise of job security. To close all these plants violates the current contract, even with the recent modifications.

UAW international president, Ron Gettelfinger, did not condemn the closings or even the secrecy around which ones. He only criticized GM's plans to increase the number of vehicles imported from Mexico and Asia. GM then agreed to build a subcompact vehicle at an idled U.S. plant, but this will barely begin to offset the impact of 14 plants closing.

In Canada, members of the Canadian Auto Workers just voted on the second round of givebacks this year. After Chrysler bullied the CAW into giving up bigger concessions than GM initially demanded, GM insisted on parity. GM is still closing plants in Canada.

The Chrysler bankruptcy process—which is expected

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WW PHOTO: LEILANI DOWELL

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After murder of abortion provider

Women vow to defeat anti-choice terrorism

By Sue Davis

The response of reproductive rights organizations was swift and unequivocal when women's health care provider Dr. George R. Tiller was assassinated in Wichita, Kan., May 31. All the national women's rights and women's health care groups denounced the murder and hailed Dr. Tiller as a hero in the fight for reproductive justice. (See statement from the National Women's Fightback Network.)

Within hours of the murder, vigils were called in Wichita and Lawrence, Kan.; Los Angeles; and Washington, D.C. At least 20 others were held in cities from coast to coast on June 1 and 2.

While many, including President Barack Obama, expressed shock that Dr. Tiller was gunned down during a church service, many longtime activists were not surprised. Dr. Tiller had been a high-profile target of anti-choice abortion foes ever since his clinic was firebombed in 1986.

Dr. Tiller was one of the few doctors in the country who provided midpregnancy abortions. In 1991 his clinic and

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Prop 8 protests demand same-sex marriage rights

New York, June 1. See page 6 for more on Prop. 8 protests.

WW PHOTO: MARSHA GOLDBERG

WFN statement:

Never stop fighting for reproductive justice!

The following statement on the assassination of Dr. George Tiller was issued June 1 by the National Women's Fightback Network.

Dr. George Tiller is a hero in the reproductive rights movement. We will never stop fighting for reproductive justice for all women!

Women have lost a true friend. Dr. George Tiller stood up for decades and provided vitally necessary medical and reproductive health care for women of all ages and backgrounds.

When an ultraright zealot shot him years ago, Dr. Tiller stood up. When his clinic was vandalized and firebombed, he stood up. When his clinic was harassed day-in and day-out, he stood up. When he received death threats day after day, year after year, for simply helping women, he stood up.

When the state of Kansas in the person of Phill Kline personally went on a vendetta against Dr. Tiller to close his clinic down, he stood up. When the state subpoenaed him and threw bogus charges at him, he stood up, and a jury acquitted him.

Dr. George Tiller understood the desperation women often faced when seeking his medical care. They came from all over the country to see him, when no other doctors would help them. They came with complicated lives and problems and he would help them, no matter what the risk was to himself or his clinic. He did what had to be done to help women.

Dr. Tiller was well loved by his community and by women from all over the country who knew that he put his life on the line every single day to provide them care. He was courageous and had tremendous integrity and compassion for women.

WW PHOTO: JOHN SANTOS

WFN contingent at June 1 vigil in New York.

That the ultraright would madly pursue its attacks on Dr. Tiller shows they have not stopped in their misogynistic mission to stop reproductive care for women and that they will stop at nothing.

We denounce their actions! We denounce the racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-woman rightwing and their murder of a dedicated, brave doctor who was doing what he should—helping women who needed him.

We denounce the coldblooded murder of Dr. Tiller as a vicious act of terrorism that is calculated to intimidate clinic providers and workers all over the country as well as the entire reproductive rights movement.

We who support women's rights and reproductive justice are standing up—with Dr. Tiller's family, his friends, his co-workers and the entire pro-choice movement—in denouncing his death. We are determined to continue the fight for national, comprehensive reproductive health care.

Dr. Tiller's death only confirms our resolve to continue to fight for reproductive justice for all women. □

Boston movement responds to HIV crisis

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

More than 150 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth poured into the Community Church of Boston May 20 for an historic event in both Massachusetts HIV organizing and youth leadership. The enthusiastic crowd, 95 percent youth of color, took part in an evening of poetry, music and documentary film organized by the New Era/Movement in Motion collective to confront the crisis in HIV gripping communities of color in Boston.

Forty-one youth, nearly 50 percent of those present, chose to be tested for HIV during the evening, the biggest single mass testing event in Massachusetts history. That was a triumph for the youth who organized the event out of a sense of urgency and resistance.

Many of those tested were first-time testers, responding enthusiastically to relevant and authentic messages from their peers to know their HIV status. The forum was part of the Test One Million Campaign, launched by the Los Angeles-based Black AIDS Institute.

"We are trying to encourage youth to not be afraid to be tested," declared Geo Yovannys, 22, a key organizer of the event. "Youth don't get the information and resources that we need, and we need to get tested."

Dishon Laing, co-chair of the Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth, said: "This event brings us together for one cause—to prevent new HIV infections. Youth don't normally discuss it. I have several friends between the ages of 16 and 20 who are HIV-positive. They are struggling right now, living at home, all youth of color. Funding for LGBT youth programs is being cut."

During the current capitalist financial crisis, funding for HIV programs in Massachusetts has been slashed by nearly 50 percent (in real dollars) from year 2000 levels. Over the same period, more than 4,000 new HIV infections have been recorded in the state. (Massachusetts AIDS Bureau; Bureau of Labor Statistics)

While the government gives trillions of dollars to Wall Street bankers, many, mostly poor and people of color, are dying unnecessarily due to late diagnosis of their HIV

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Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples—Black and white, Latin@, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students.

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This week ...

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Support grows as

Congressional leaders say Troy Davis is innocent

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

U.S. Representatives John Lewis and Hank Johnson, accompanied by NAACP National President Ben Jealous, visited Georgia death row prisoner Troy Anthony Davis for close to two hours on May 29.

Speaking to a crowd of Davis' supporters outside the prison walls in Jackson, Ga., the three leaders, convinced of his innocence, pledged to pursue other means to bring justice in Davis' case.

Davis was convicted in Chatham County in 1991 of killing off-duty policeman Mark Allen McPhail at a trial where the only evidence presented to the jury was eyewitness testimony. The state had no weapon, fingerprints or other physical evidence connecting Davis to the crime. Seven of the nine witnesses have since recanted their testimony, with several directly charging Savannah police with intimidating and threatening them into making false statements.

Additional witnesses never heard at the trial have claimed another man, Sylvester "Red" Coles, is the shooter. Coles, who originally went to the police and named Davis, is one of only two witnesses who have not recanted their testimony. The other initially told police at the scene he would not be able to identify the killer, yet two years later he pointed to Troy Davis in court.

After both the Georgia Supreme Court and the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals both narrowly turned down Davis' motions for a court hearing on the new evidence, Davis' lawyers have filed a last effort with the U.S. Supreme Court.

When asked what additional options Lewis and Johnson might pursue, they mentioned Congressional legislation or a presidential pardon. Jealous said that the case was a national priority for the NAACP, and would be a major item on the agenda of their upcoming convention.

A week earlier, two dozen members of Congress sent a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder asking him to "take any action, open any investigation or simply use the persuasion of your office to ensure that a grave injustice is not done in Georgia." The letter referred to the ongoing legacy of segregation and Jim Crow ideology that persists in the South, as well as the heightened racism fed by media coverage of the police "manhunt" for the killer of a white police officer.

While more and more elected officials and legal experts, including judges and prosecutors, publicly call for a new trial for Davis, the grassroots movement that has worked tirelessly to bring national and international attention to the blatant injustice of Davis' case is not resting. For several weekends, teams have been canvassing Savannah neighborhoods, collecting signatures on petitions directed to the Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue and the Pardons and Parole Board.

The International Action Center has set up an online petition that is being sent to media outlets as well as to the Obama administration. To add your support, go to www.iacenter.org. For more information on Davis' case, see www.gfadp.org. □

Native peoples protest at S.F. Giants ballpark

By Joan Marquardt
San Francisco

Local Native activists and their supporters demonstrated May 25 against the Atlanta Braves baseball team outside AT&T Park, home of the San Francisco Giants.

Tony Gonzales, spokesperson for the local American Indian Movement-West chapter, stated that the misuse of the term "braves" and the "tomahawk chop" gesture "are offensive to American Indian people." He said that the AIM fight to boycott the Atlanta Braves baseball team for their use of racist logos and negative depictions of Indigenous peoples would be taken next to the S.F. Board of Supervisors, and "across the whole country."

According to AIM-West's press release: "The National Indian Education Association recently adopted a resolution condemning the use of racist and stereotypical images by sports and media. ... We should look at this problem as an issue of racial injustice for people of all colors. ... Join with us and support the human rights and dignity of the First Peoples of this land!"

One demonstrator, Dee Allen, who identified as "African-American, Cherokee and a little bit Italian," expressed that he was insulted by the use of the "chop" by the Atlanta Braves fans walking past him into the ballpark. However, some of the baseball fans in attendance at the game expressed their support for the protest.

Another demonstrator held up a very large photo of wrongly imprisoned Lakota Native leader Leonard Peltier. Others chanted, "Stop the chop!" and "Boycott the Braves!"

Quanah Brightman, vice president of United Native Americans Inc., said that the San Francisco Giants were racist, too. Brightman stated that he had worked for the Giants at the AT&T ballpark until he spoke up in opposition to a non-Indian food vendor in the ballpark selling "Indian Fried Bread." He sued the management for wrongful termination and won. Pointing to the pavement and the entrance to the ball field, Brightman said, "This is Ohlone people's land. How many Native Americans are employed here today? None!"

WW PHOTO: JOAN MARQUARDT

Dee Allen

Similar demonstrations were planned for the next two nights and at future games played by sports teams with racist names or mascots, such as the Washington Redskins and the Cleveland Indians. For information about further activities, contact eltonyg@earthlink.net. □

Plans for Marine high school stopped

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

A small article in the local newspaper announcing a DeKalb County Board of Education decision to open a public high school as a Marine Institute this fall ignited an immediate response from anti-war groups, veterans' organizations, parents, teachers and youth.

For three months, opponents conducted door-to-door canvassing, wrote letters, rallied, held press conferences and spoke at every possible venue about the multiple reasons DeKalb residents objected to the secret deal with the military.

E-mails and letters sent by the elected members of the school board expressed the sentiment that the largely African-American student population in this Atlanta suburb needed "regimentation and discipline." Many parents responded that their children needed smaller classes, music and arts programs, better equipment and fully staffed schools.

The plans called for a Marine commandant, for courses in military history and marksmanship, and for youth to wear military uniforms starting in the 9th grade. The Marines' share of the cost was to come from their recruiting budget, putting the lie to official claims that the school was not a device to increase military enlistment. Other details about the Marine high school were scarce, including the cost, location and curriculum.

On May 29, School Board officials announced that plans for the school had been halted "temporarily," citing failure to get final approval from the Secretary of the Navy.

Tim Franzen of the American Friends Service Committee, one of the organizers of the community opposition, instead commented that the school board and military "are feeling enormous pressure ... and right now they just want all this pressure to go away."

He further noted that while Arne Duncan, the Obama administration's Secretary of Education, was superintendant of Chicago's public schools, each branch of the military opened a high school there. Across the country, there are at least a dozen public schools operating under military command. Franzen said, "We know this is a continuing fight to provide a quality education for every child, not an unquestioning and lock-step indoctrination that promotes military solutions to economic and social problems."

The activists plan to hold a news conference and rally before a June 1 school board meeting to reaffirm their determination to stop any future plans to open the Marine Institute in DeKalb County. □

Was racism a factor in police shooting?

By Monica Moorehead
New York

Black, Latina/o and Indigenous communities inside the U.S. live under a 24-hour occupation. Who are these occupiers? The armed police, whether they are in uniform or undercover. The main function of the police under capitalism is to protect the private interests of the "haves"—the transnational corporations and banks—first and foremost. The police, therefore, are trained to view the "have nots"—workers and the oppressed—as a class to be kept under social control with various tactics such as racial profiling.

The police are majority white in the U.S. but there exists a significant number of Black, Latina/o and Asian police officers. Racism and national oppression permeate every social institution in U.S. capitalist society, including the police. Officers of color have issued complaints against white officers for racist behavior, along with having to live under the constant fear of being "mistakenly" shot.

This reality was brought home once again within the notorious New York Police Department. The list of police killings of Black and Latina/o victims by the NYPD is all too long and well-documented, from Sean Bell to Anthony Baez to Eleanor Bumpurs.

WW COMMENTARY

But this past May 28, it was a 25-year-old police officer, Omar Edwards, who was fatally shot by a fellow officer, Andrew Dunton. Edwards was Black and Dunton is white. Edwards, who was off-duty and in plainclothes, was shot in the chest and arm while chasing a Latino man in East Harlem with his gun drawn. According to news reports, it is only after Edwards had been shot and was lying on the pavement bleeding to death that Dunton and two other white officers discovered, once they had handcuffed him, that he was an officer.

As of now, Dunton has not been relieved of his duties, which begs the question: Would the reaction of the big-business media and authorities have been the same if Edwards had killed a white officer?

While Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly are trying to play down that "race" was a factor in the death of Edwards, community leaders are not silent on the issue.

The Rev. Al Sharpton stated that he was "concerned of a growing pattern of black officers being killed with the assumption that they are the criminals." (New York Times, May 29)

Congressperson Charles Rangel was viciously attacked by the corporate media for saying, in response to Barack and Michelle Obama's recent social visit to New York, "Make sure he doesn't run around East Harlem unidentified." (ny1.com, May 30)

The Rev. Sharpton, City Councilperson Charles Barron and State Assemblyperson Inez Barron helped lead a march in Harlem on May 30 to protest Edwards' death.

Rickford Burke, president of the Caribbean Guyana Institute for Democracy,

Continued on page 6

Prime mortgage holders hit

Mass layoffs cause foreclosures to soar

By Kris Hamel

The home foreclosure crisis in the United States continues to grow in scope and size. Workers are losing their homes at record rates as mass layoffs and plant closings affect millions.

A new twist has been added to the foreclosure disaster, one that accelerates the overall capitalist economic crisis even further.

What started out as a racist, sexist ploy by bankers and lenders to lure poor and working people into usurious subprime loans has now grown into an avalanche of foreclosures on homeowners with prime mortgage loans, mostly workers who have lost their jobs.

On May 25 the New York Times sounded the alarm with the headline: "Job Losses Push Safer Mortgages to Foreclosure." Analysts predict that up to 60 percent of mortgage defaults in 2009 will be primarily due to unemployment, up from 29 percent in 2008.

The article reports: "From November to February, the number of prime mortgages that were delinquent at least 90 days, were in foreclosure or had deteriorated to the point that the lender took possession of the home increased more than 473,000, exceeding 1.5 million, according to a New York Times analysis of data provided by First American CoreLogic, a real estate research group. Those loans totaled more than $224 billion.

"During the same period, subprime mortgages in those three categories increased by fewer than 14,000, reaching 1.65 million. The number of similarly troubled Alt-A loans—those given to people with slightly tainted credit—rose 159,000, to 836,000.

"Over all, more than four million loans worth $717 billion were in the three distressed categories in February, a jump of more than 60 percent in dollar terms compared with a year earlier."

The article also states: "With many economists anticipating that the unemployment rate will rise into the double digits from its current 8.9 percent, foreclosures are expected to accelerate. That could exacerbate bank losses, adding pressure to the financial system and the broader economy. 'We're about to have a big problem,' said Morris A. Davis, a real estate expert at the University of Wisconsin. 'Foreclosures were bad last year? It's going to get worse.'"

The Mortgage Bankers Association reported on May 28 that a record 12.07 percent of homeowners in the U.S. are currently in foreclosure or delinquent in their mortgage payments. "The delinquency rate includes loans that are at least one payment past due but does not include loans in the process of foreclosure. The percentage of loans in the foreclosure process at the end of the first quarter was 3.85 percent, an increase of 55 basis points from the fourth quarter of 2008 and up 138 basis points from one year ago. Both the foreclosure inventory percentage and the quarter to quarter increase are record highs." (mortgagebankers.org)

The Obama administration has earmarked $75 billion for "incentives" for banks and lenders to modify home loans, as they are required to do under federal law. The Making Home Affordable Program instituted in March was supposed to save up to 4 million homeowners from foreclosure. But the Treasury Department has estimated that the number of loan modifications accomplished thus far is "more than 10,000 but fewer than 55,000."

Under the federal MHAP, unemployed workers must verify that they will be receiving unemployment benefits for at least nine months in order to count those funds as income for purposes of getting their mortgage modified. Many unemployed workers are or will be excluded from being able to take advantage of the program because of this. The program must be amended immediately to take into account the vast unemployment impacting homeowners.

It is the duty of the federal government to enforce all laws requiring banks and financial institutions to modify home loans under the terms of their multibillion-dollar, taxpayer-funded bailouts. It is past time for a blanket moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions to be implemented nationwide to mitigate the disaster facing poor and working people.

E-mail: khamel@workers.org

Protest stops eviction by Bank of America

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Vanessa Fluker
WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

A militant demonstration on May 29 outside Bank of America in downtown Detroit stopped the scheduled June 1 eviction of Michelle Hart and her elderly mother. Countrywide Home Loans, which is owned by Bank of America, refused to modify Hart's subprime, adjustable rate mortgage as required by federal law. The demonstration, as well as phone calls from around the country to BOA president Kenneth Lewis at the bank's headquarters in Charlotte, N.C., forced the lender to adjourn the eviction.

Hart's attorney, Vanessa G. Fluker, told Workers World: "She tried since January 2008, for almost a year and a half, to get a loan modification from Countrywide. By the time the lender got around to looking at the papers, they said it was 'too late' to modify because the sheriff's sale already took place. In reality a simple affidavit of expungement would have allowed them to modify her loan."

Like millions of homeowners, Hart fell behind on her mortgage when the interest rate adjusted upward while she was experiencing a job loss. According to Fluker, Hart was able to get work through a temp agency, but Countrywide told her that the income from those jobs "didn't count" for purposes of loan modification.

Countrywide and BOA are required under federal contract to do loan modifications. But they still refuse to help many homeowners and instead move forward on foreclosures and evictions. They would rather force families onto the streets than work out terms that would allow the bank to receive payment and the borrowers to save their home.

"Both Countrywide and Bank of America have received billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded bailouts," said Fluker. "On top of that, the federal government actually pays banks to do what they are required to do under laws like the Making Home Affordable Program: work with lenders to modify mortgages so that people can keep their homes. Anyone can go online to www.financialstability.gov/docs/agreements and read the contracts. You'll see that Countrywide receives $1,864,000,000 and Bank of America gets $798,900,000 to modify loans."

Countrywide told Fluker on May 29 that the eviction of Hart and her mother, who suffers from pancreatic cancer, was "adjourned while they review the file." In the meantime, no promise to modify Hart's loan has been forthcoming and the eviction is still pending.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, which organized the May 29 demonstration on less than two days' notice, urges Hart's supporters to keep up the pressure on Countrywide and Bank of America. Call Bank of America CEO Kenneth Lewis at 704-386-5687 and tell him to modify Michelle Hart's loan. Her home is located at 27685 Sutherland, Southfield, Mich.; loan no. 138009372. □

People's Economic Summit

By Betsey Piette
New York

WW PHOTO: LEILANI DOWELL

U.N. Ambassador Byron Blake, speaking for the president of the U.N. General Assembly.

Gathering under a banner stating, "Another World is Urgently Needed—But We Must Fight for It!" more than 200 community, labor, youth, immigrant rights, housing, health care and social justice activists met on May 31 in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza for the People's Economic Summit.

Initiated by the Bail Out the People Movement, the gathering was to coincide with the United Nations General Assembly's economic summit, originally scheduled for June 1-3, to address the concerns of the 192 member nations that are being marginalized by the G20 summit meetings.

This G192 U.N. meeting, planned to address the world financial and economic crisis and its impact on developing countries, was forced to postpone until later in June.

While disappointed that the U.N. gathering did not go ahead as scheduled, those attending the People's Economic Summit enthusiastically took part in five workshops with the themes Defending Immigrant/Worker Rights; Building a Struggle of Youth and Students; Capitalist Crisis, Racism, Political Repression and the Prisons; Workers' Struggles in the U.S.; and Struggles Against U.S. Corporate Power around the World.

A general panel following the workshops examined the roots of the economic meltdown and presented the case for alternatives to capitalism and imperialism. A second panel discussed building the mass movement and strategies for struggle.

The People's Economic Summit endorsed the call for protests in Pittsburgh at the G20 summit this fall. See future issues of Workers World for more on this event. □

Justice for Robert Mitchell!

Why we need a People's Summit

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Hundreds of people took to the streets on May 21 demanding justice for Robert Mitchell, 16, who died after being tased by Warren police. Mitchell, who had fled from a police stop in Warren, was chased into Detroit, where he was apprehended, tased and later died on April 10.

The demonstration was organized by the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality and the family of Robert Mitchell. Several other groups, including the Detroit NAACP, the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), and Detroit City of Hope, helped organize the demonstration.

The gathering started with a rally at the Boys & Girls Club field on the city's northeast side. They marched to Eight Mile Road—the border with Warren—where they chanted slogans demanding justice for Robert Mitchell.

Shouts of "No justice, no peace!" and "Justice for Robert Mitchell!" reverberated throughout the community. Most of the march participants were youth who either knew the victim or were from the community. Others came to express their concern and outrage at the continuing scourge of death-by-law-enforcement.

The Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality has been organizing against police misconduct for over 10 years. According to spokesperson Ron Scott, the group has investigated dozens of allegations of brutality and the unnecessary use of lethal force just this year alone. Several years ago, the DCAPB launched a success-

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Militant rally supports Stella D'oro workers

Special to Workers World
New York

The cops were surprised when, at the end of the solidarity march to support Stella D'oro workers, protesters slipped past their barricades and charged the plant gates. After all, other than the strikers from Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers Local 50 and their families, a large number of the 900 to 1,000 marchers were either college professors from the Professional Staff Congress or high school and primary school teachers brought from Nassau County, just east of New York City, and upstate New York by New York State United Teachers.

The PSC represents faculty and staff at the City University of New York. NYSUT is the labor union confederation that includes all the teacher unions in New York. Its affiliates have 605,000 members.

College professors and teachers are not groups of people that the cops expect to be militant. But they, like many other workers, are angry about what is being done to working and poor people in this country.

Sheila Goldberg of NYSUT's Nassau County Political Action Committee expressed this sentiment as she presented a check for $2,009 to the Stella D'oro workers' strike fund, saying, "I've been a union member for 50 years and I think we all must fight against union busting."

Mike di Fillippou, one of the strike leaders from BCTGM Local 50, explained, "We've been able to stay out for 10 months, with nobody crossing the line because we are solid like a fist." He thanked the PSC for being "with us from day one."

PSC President Barbara Bowen said, "Brynwood Partners [the investment firm that owns Stella D'oro] is attempting to make workers and the community poorer. The labor movement must end this attack."

To end her talk she quoted from a poem by the famous Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, which says the people—the workers and the poor—deserve a seat at the table. Lizette Colón, a PSC chapter leader from Hostos Community College who has been active in supporting the strike, then read it in Spanish.

There were contingents from other unions, including New York Nurses United, District Council 37's Technical Guild, the Transport Workers Union, and postal and domestic workers. □

Lead banner in May 30 labor solidarity march supporting the Stella D'oro strike.

WW PHOTO

Domestic workers need a 'Bill of Rights'

Domestic workers are excluded from the protection of almost every major labor law. They do an unimaginable range of essential tasks and socially necessary work, caring for infants and children, the elderly and sick, providing meals and housekeeping.

They are mostly women of color, many of them undocumented. Isolation on the job makes them more vulnerable. All too often domestic workers are subjected to abuse by their rich and haughty employers. Without time-off or vacation pay, they risk losing their jobs by asking for a sick day or the opportunity to seek medical attention.

Domestic Workers Bill of Rights

Now, jobs are fewer and there are more layoffs. Bad economic conditions are increasing abuse for workers with no recourse to fight back. Nationwide, domestic workers are campaigning to win basic legal rights, including protection of the labor laws that cover other workers in the United States—overtime, job security, basic respect and recognition—terms laid out under the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.

In New York State during the current legislative session Domestic Workers United is asking supporters to attend at least one of the following events:

June 4, Harlem Community Dinner Honoring the Legacy of Domestic Workers

Join domestic workers, faith leaders, legislators and the Harlem community.

From 7 to 9 p.m., St. Philips Episcopal Church, 204 W. 134th St. @ 7th Ave. in Harlem, N.Y. RSVP: priscilla@domesticworkersunited. org or 212-481-5747

June 8, Domestic Workers Speak Truth to Power in Albany

A day of culture, testimony, legislative visits, a rally and march at a critical time in the legislative session.

Buses are leaving at 6:30 a.m. from the north side of Union Square Park in front of Barnes and Noble; returning by 8 p.m. the same day. RSVP: aijendwu@gmail.com or 212-481-5747

June 12–13, a 24-hour Vigil for The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights

Many domestic workers, particularly live-in workers, work around the clock without rest. We're asking all New Yorkers who support domestic workers' rights to stand together for 24 hours straight in a symbolic show of support for the passage of the Domestic Workers Bill.

From 8:00 am to 8:00 a.m. at City Hall, across from 250 Broadway.

RSVP and sign up for a shift: aijendwu@gmail.com or 212-481-5747

June 14, N.Y. Children and Families March for Domestic Workers

March for "peace and justice in the home" to show how many people of faith support and are connected to domestic workers. Children will lead, with many generations marching together.

From 1 to 4:00 p.m., City Hall, across from 250 Broadway.

RSVP, particularly with groups: joycedwu@gmail.com or 212-481-5747

June 15, National Domestic Workers Alliance Regional Congress Public Forum: "Women and Work"

Join domestic worker organizers, feminist scholars, activists, legislators and others, featuring a video including appearances by Jennifer Baumgardner, Guerilla Girls, Maria Hinojosa, Katha Pollitt, Amy Richards, Gloria Steinem and Jessica Valenti.

From 7 to 9 p.m. at Julius Held Auditorium: 304 Barnard College Hall, Barnard Center for Research on Women, 3009 Broadway, N.Y.

For more information, visit www.domesticworkersunited.org.

—Lal Roohk

GM bankruptcy

Continued from page 1

to be completed before the end of June—was for the ruling class a dress rehearsal for this brutal, state-managed restructuring of GM.

The breakup of GM, however, has worldwide ramifications. GM is shedding six brands: Hummer, Pontiac, Saturn, Opel, Saab, and Vauxhall. British Vauxhall was purchased by GM in 1925 and German-based Opel has been wholly owned by GM since 1929.

The Italian car company Fiat, which is about to take control of Chrysler, attempted to buy Opel, Saab, and Vauxhall as well as GM's Latin American operations. The German government rejected Fiat's bid in favor of the big Canadian auto-parts company Magna in alliance with the Russian company Sberbank. GM will retain a minority stake in Opel/Vauxhall. Whether Fiat now attempts to buy a smaller piece of GM remains to be seen.

Magna has already stated that it "needs" to cut 2,600 of Opel's 25,000 German workers. Layoffs are hitting workers everywhere, including low-paid autoworkers in Mexico, China and India.

Who's the boss?

While in bankruptcy GM will have access to tens of billions of dollars in debtor-in-possession financing from the federal government. In exchange, the U.S. Treasury plans to take a 60 percent share of the reorganized GM. The Canadian government will get a 12 percent share.

The bondholders holding $27 billion in unsecured debt will get a 10 percent stake with the option to acquire another 15 percent.

The fund to cover UAW retirees' health care—the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association—will hold the remaining 17.5 percent of GM stock. GM stock prices fell on May 29 to a hundred-year low of 75 cents a share. For this junk stock the UAW agreed to accept only half of GM's contractual obligations to the VEBA in cash. This further endangers retiree health benefits.

No credence should be given to the right-wing protests of disgruntled bondholders claiming the UAW got special treatment.

Who is getting special treatment? The six billion dollars in secured debt held by big banks will be repaid almost in full—after all the interest they've collected, Wall Street will probably come out ahead.

The disassembling of GM—once a world monopoly—is taking place with an unprecedented level of state intervention. Some say the auto industry is being nationalized—Republican lawmakers have already coined the phrase "Government Motors." Others think, given the economic and environmental damage from private capitalist ownership, the industry should be nationalized and retooled for green jobs.

What needs to be understood is that the capitalist state is re-engineering a sector of the economy in the interest of the capitalist class as a whole. The Auto Task Force is stacked with finance capitalists. The workers who actually build the cars are worse off. What they spent seven decades fighting for has been taken away, their plants are closing, and all they got was a lousy reassurance that there won't be a Chapter 13 liquidation—yet. When this accelerated and drastic streamlining is complete, the industry will go back to private capitalist ownership under conditions more favorable to exploitation of the workers for greater profit.

Calling for less state control or more state control is no solution when you are dealing with a capitalist state. Yet the new situation at both GM and Chrysler—falsely portrayed as "ownership" by the workers and "the taxpayers"—ought to provoke discussion among workers.

We need to ask questions, not only about who is in control but who should be. Capitalist ownership of the auto industry has destroyed our jobs, our families, our schools and our communities—taxpayers who will not profit one penny from the state's role in the restructuring. We should demand that all of our plants be kept open and our shut plants reopened under real workers' control. Given the sorry treatment we've received at the hands of capital, this would not be "special treatment," but a simple matter of justice.

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org

Boston movement responds to HIV crisis

Continued from page 2

status. Early diagnosis is critical both for survival and for reducing HIV incidence. Scientific studies show that people who know their HIV status reduce their risk behavior by two-thirds. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

New Era/Movement in Motion draws organizers from the Boston Youth Organizing Project, Healing Our Land, BAGLY, Boston GLASS Drop-in Center, Reflect and Strengthen, Stonewall Warriors, and Design Studio for Social Justice. The group is "organizing from below," designed and led by LGBT youth leaders of color on an "unbought and unbossed" basis. This group is a driving force in the Boston Test One Million Coalition, comprised of mainstream AIDS service organizations and leaders from the Black community. New Era's next event is June 27, National HIV Testing Day. For more information, contact Minister Franklin Hobbs, healoland@yahoo.com. □

SAN FRANCISCO

Activists protest Prop 8

By Joan Marquardt
San Francisco

Several hundred people crowded around the building housing the California Supreme Court on the morning of May 26. The six-to-one decision upholding Prop 8, the ban on same-sex marriage passed by California voters in November, immediately set the crowd in motion.

Hundreds of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and progressive supporters of same-sex marriage and equal rights marched past City Hall and into the intersection of Van Ness and Grove, stopping traffic on a major thoroughfare for the rest of the morning and into the afternoon. Chanting, "They say get back! We say fight back!" and other slogans, the protesters formed a huge circle and sat down in an act of civil disobedience.

Almost 175 people were eventually arrested, cited and released over the afternoon, while hundreds more milled about the intersection in support. They wore T-shirts reading, "Separate is not equal," and carried signs stating, "We all deserve the freedom to marry."

By evening rush hour, many more outraged San Franciscans came after work and joined the thousands who rallied at City Hall and then marched in the street to the downtown Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in the Yerba Buena Gardens park.

While listening to speeches, some in the crowd took exception to the aggression by San Francisco cops against an African-American woman who had stepped off the curb where the police didn't think she should have. As cops attempted to put her into a police van that had rushed to the scene, the crowd moved around the police and chanted, "Let her go, let her go!"

Cops grabbed her and held her face-down while she screamed in pain. The van left the scene, but when the woman was pulled to her feet and led away, the crowd started chanting, "March! March!" With that, a large portion of those in the park walked back onto the street and marched away, eventually ending up in the largely LGBT Castro neighborhood.

On May 30, many more gathered in the Central Valley city of Fresno to further protest the California Supreme Court decision. About 100 same-sex marriage supporters gathered in Selma, Calif., in the morning and were joined by more and more marchers as they walked the 14.5 miles to the Fresno City Hall, joining thousands rallying for same-sex marriage civil rights.

Demonstrators blocked traffic in San Francisco to protest Prop 8, the law banning same-sex marriage.

WW PHOTO: JOAN MARQUARDT

Some of the demonstrators noted the positive influence of the original Selma, Ala., civil rights marches in the 1960s, when African Americans set the example by taking to the streets for their rights. The oppression of African Americans and other people of color, especially those who are LGBT, has historically been greater, and many in the LGBT movement draw inspiration from the victories fought for and won during the 20th century. □

San Diego denounces Prop 8 court ruling

By Bob McCubbin
San Diego

Only eight hours after the announcement of the California Supreme Court's prejudice-based ruling supporting Prop 8 on May 26, 5,000 disappointed, sad, but mostly angry San Diegans stormed out of Balboa Park onto Sixth Avenue and chanted their way to the heart of downtown. Taking the full width of median-divided Broadway, the protesters marched through the canyon with signs and banners held high until they reached the so-called "Hall of Justice" courthouse for a "Day of Decision" rally.

Speakers there included the city's mayor, one of whose daughters is a lesbian; Miguel, a gay Latino man from Iowa who is legally married to his partner; other community members; and local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender leaders. Miguel told the crowd, "I live in a state that says marriage is between a man and a woman. But I'm married to a guy, and I'm not going to stop working until all people have that right. This will not be simple, but Martin Luther King and Harvey Milk were great heroes who fought against discrimination, and we have to work at least as hard as they did."

The next day, a dramatic escalation of the struggle for equal marriage rights was organized by the San Diego Alliance for Marriage Equality. As the noon hour struck at the County Administration Building, Michael Anderson, a 27-year-old warehouse worker, and Brian Baumgardner, a 26-year-old bartender, entered the San Diego County Clerk's office on the second floor and asked for a marriage application.

Following them into the office, and witness to the staff member's polite refusal based on Prop 8 and the previous day's court ruling, were a lot of media and a diverse assortment of community members and supporters: men and women; high school and college students, workers taking a day off and seniors; African Americans, Latinas/os and whites; seasoned activists and those new to the struggle; and a contingent of LGBT people and straight allies.

WW PHOTO: ZOLA RICES MUHAMMAD

At the San Diego sit-in are, from left, Michael Anderson, who was there to marry Brian Baumgardner; Zakiya Khabir, San Diego Alliance for Marriage Equality organizer; and Adrian Rodriguez and Jonathan Goetz, who were also demanding the right to marry.

At the height of the five-hour sit-in that unfolded, close to 70 people were involved, some moving between the office and the support rally outside. It's hard to believe that any work got done that afternoon, at least in that wing of the administration building. Brian and Michael's supporters sang and chanted tirelessly to thundering effect, stopping only periodically for loud readings of inspiring printed material distributed by the organizers and personal testimonials from almost everyone present.

In tears, a straight woman who had been married in this very office three years earlier expressed her feeling that it was unacceptable that others were being refused this beautiful experience. Rhythm Turner, a young lesbian, spoke of the hate crime she had been the target of recently. Several people identified themselves as Christians and several others as heterosexuals needing to express their solidarity with those of us being denied our civil rights. Other speakers addressed the need to continue reaching out, winning new allies and, above all, staying active in the struggle.

During the course of the afternoon, another gay couple and a lesbian couple entered the occupied office and unsuccessfully requested marriage applications. They were welcomed with cheers and noisy chanting. Among the most popular chants of the afternoon were "We are ready—sí se puede!—to get married—sí se puede!" "Justice won't wait! Repeal Prop 8!" "Homophobia must go!" and "Obama! Obama! Let Momma marry Momma!"

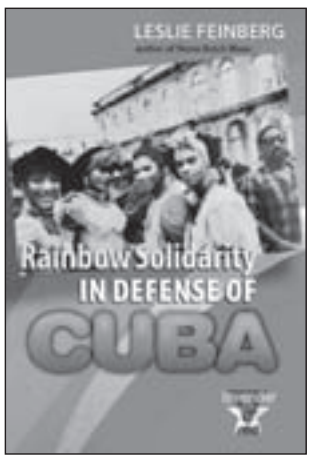
Some minutes after the office officially closed at 5 o'clock, the protesters, still chanting, filed out for a final rally on the steps of the building. "We'll be back! We'll be bigger!" they promised.

Several corporate media organizations attempted to use the lack of arrests following the sit-in to criticize the protesters. However, the people in struggle will decide what tactics are appropriate in any given situation, with no particular interest, really, in what the expectations of the big-business media might be. □

Rainbow Solidarity
In Defense of CUBA

This new book is a compilation of 25 articles about how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love from the colonial and imperial eras. The articles are part of the Lavender & Red series from Workers World weekly newspaper.
The never-before-compiled information offers a factual vista on the trajectory of progress of the Cuban Revolution.
It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

Order from www.Leftbooks.com after June 21.



Was racism a factor in police shooting?

Continued from page 3

stated: "The NYPD officer who intentionally shot and killed officer Omar Edwards must be charged with murder. I am sick and weary of white rough cops roaming the streets of New York City, shooting at Black young men, with intention to kill, with impunity. NYPD policies facilitate a malignant culture of coded silence, coverups and lies whenever these crimes occur." (caribbeanamericanforum.com, May 29)

Edwards is not the first officer of color to be killed by white police and most likely will not be the last. Some will say that Edwards was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But the truth of the matter is that Edwards lost his life like so many, many others because he was a Black man, cop or no cop, living in a thoroughly racist society. □

Workers' delegation from U.S. sees Cuba's challenges and advances

By Clarence Thomas and Cheryl LaBash
Havana, Cuba

The writers attended the 2009 May Day celebration of a half-million Cuban workers in Havana. Clarence Thomas is former secretary-treasurer of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Workers Union and co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement. The 21-person U.S. delegation included ILWU past International President David Arian. The delegation also visited a school, a museum, attended the 70th Anniversary CTC Conference and met with labor leaders.

Coming from the U.S., where youth mortgage their future wages for a college education and health insurance fails to guarantee coverage for catastrophic illnesses, the notion that health care and education can be free really caught our attention. Education and health care are necessary for the basic human right of each individual to develop to their fullest potential. Human development, not profit, is Cuba's national priority.

We saw an example of Cuba's national priority at the Dora Alonso Special School in Havana. According to Imilla Cecilia Campos Valdés, director of the Dora Alonso Special School, only 150 to 170 Cuban children have been diagnosed with autism, far fewer than the 1 out of 170 reported in the U.S.

This school was founded in 2002 to mark the 40th anniversary of Cuban special education. Two years later a second school opened in Santiago province. In other provinces autistic children are incorporated in the general school system and given special attention, using the best practices researched and developed at the special autism schools.

The classroom student-teacher ratio in Dora Alonso School is better than an astounding two to one. That means only four children are with a teacher and assistant in each room. Specialists in speech therapy, physical education, music, art, computers and home economics, and transportation aides, a doctor and a nurse make up the support staff.

Providing early intensive intervention, therapy and family participation are very important to the good development of these children, the director said. The school's goal is returning the autistic students to either the general schools or special education schools. Socialization, communication and relations with other children improve their outcome.

Delores Lemon-Thomas, a 33-year education veteran from California, knew of no such special public school for autism in the U.S. She shared the funding and staffing challenges that curtail special-education programs in her school district, where special-needs classrooms have 12 children, including those with autism.

Teachers at Dora Alonzo study for their masters and doctoral degrees tuition-free. Special education teachers in the U.S. are required to pay high tuition and fees for their studies.

Longshore worker received heart transplant

U.S. workers today are losing employer-based health care insurance and paying more even if they still have coverage. Meanwhile, a Cuban port worker affectionately called "Malanga" told us the story of his 1986 heart transplant, which didn't cost him a penny. Like every other Cuban, Maximiliano Velásquez pays nothing for medications or in-patient hospital visits required for him every six months.

Alberto Marchante, secretary-general of the Union of Merchant Marines, Ports & Fisheries, said of Malanga's surgery, "How can you put a price on saving the life of a worker?"

Malanga voluntarily returned to work in 1987 but strictly follows his doctors' diet and activity recommendations to take care of the gift of a second life. He knows this gift costs Cuban society a lot, especially with the U.S. blockade that makes his medicines even more expensive for the Cuban health care system.

Although he retired in 2004, Malanga, now 74, still is a leader in his union at the port where he started working in 1950 at age 16 to help support his family. That precarious, irregular, low-wage work at the whim of the port bosses' profits ended in 1959. The socialist revolution brought permanent jobs and social security with free education and worker control. Malanga shares these life experiences with today's younger port workers.

Meeting with Cuban labor leaders

In a special meeting, Cuban union leaders Alberto Marchante, José Suárez and Antonio Molina exchanged views with us. Marchante, secretary-general of the Port, Maritime and Fishers union, discussed the history of the Cuban labor movement from the arrival of the first Europeans in 1492 to the present. He stressed the key role of unity in achieving Cuba's political and economic independence and the social security won by Cuban workers.

Marchante debunked the imperialist slanders leveled against the Cuban revolution, pointing out that poet and political leader José Martí first advanced the idea of one united party in the 1890s as necessary to the liberation of Cuba from Spain.

José Suárez, national president of the National Association of Innovation and Rationalization (ANIR), knew what we were thinking when he described ANIR's cost-cutting role in Cuban workplaces. He quickly pointed out that no Cuban workers lose their jobs in this process.

As early as 1959, U.S. Secretary of State Christian Herter characterized suppression of the Cuban sugar quota as "economic warfare." The U.S. Government Printing Office publication on "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960," shamelessly states its aim to "bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government" and of a socialist revolution that was popularly supported by the

Continued on page 8

ILWU's history filled with international solidarity

By Clarence Thomas
Havana, Cuba

The largest 2009 May Day celebration held anywhere in the world, according to CNN, took place at the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana, Cuba. Past ILWU international president David Arian and former Local 10 secretary-treasurer and Million Worker March leader Clarence Thomas were part of a U.S. delegation, which also included International Longshore Association members. Arian is currently the secretary-treasurer of the Harry Bridges Institute in San Pedro, Calif.

The ILWU has been guided by the principle that solidarity with workers of all lands is sound union policy. To demonstrate this ILWU has sponsored overseas delegations of rank-and-file members and has, in turn, hosted trade union visitors from every continent. Long ago the union came to the conclusion that if it was to know and understand the labor movement on a global scale it would have to obtain this information first hand.

ILWU-CTC history of solidarity

Our delegation did just that during our 12-day visit in Havana, Cuba, but it is also something that is deep in ILWU's history of solidarity. This was not the first time longshore workers met with their Cuban counterparts. The ILWU-Cuban solidarity work started in the years leading up to the 1959 socialist revolution. After World War II, ILWU members visited the Philippines, Cuba, Mexico and Puerto Rico to strategize and share information and knowledge on how to strengthen labor solidarity with sugar workers.

In 1947, the ILWU participated in the organizing of the International Sugar Workers Committee. The initial meeting took place in Havana, Cuba. The ILWU's Louis Goldblatt was elected chairman. Jesús Menéndez, head of the Cuban Sugar Workers representing 350,000 workers, was elected vice-chair. A plan of action was adopted to stop the exploitation of workers by the international sugar cartel.

The following year Menéndez, who was a member of Cuban Congress and the Communist Party, was assassinated while on an inspection tour of sugar mills with which his union had contracts. In the February 1948 issue of the ILWU Dispatcher, Secretary-Treasurer Louis Goldblatt said the killing was the logical outcome of the U.S. Department of State policies, which were subservient to U.S.-based sugar companies.

Goldblatt added, "The murder was part and parcel of the [colonial] Cuban government, [U.S.] American sugar interests, and the U.S. State Department's plan to destroy the unions and eliminate any vestige of democracy in Cuba."

This history came alive when the delegation visited the Menéndez home, now a museum. The curator showed documents that were donated by the ILWU library and presented to the museum by Local 10 member Jack Heyman during his visit in 2001. While there, ILWU members recounted the history of ILWU and the Cuban sugar workers solidarity. They discussed how the ILWU organized a concert tour for famed singer and humanitarian Paul Robeson in Hawaii. Money from the tour was donated to Menéndez's surviving family.

U.S. port workers say 'Free the Five'

In more recent solidarity, ILWU Local 10 sent a strong letter to President Barack Obama urging him to look into the case of the Cuban Five and free them and also grant visas for Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, who have been cruelly prevented for nearly a decade from visiting their spouses René González and Gerardo Hernández, two of the five. Local 10's letter is an important part of the growing international labor involvement in the struggle to free the Cuban Five—who also include Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González.

PHOTO: DELORES LEMON-THOMAS

At Jesus Menendez Museum, past ILWU Int'l. Pres. Dave Arian and Clarence Thomas from ILWU Local 10 hold union newsletters dated 1947 picturing the Cuban sugar workers' leader and stating, "Sugar Industry plagued by Misery and Privation … Burdened by Heritage of Slavery."

The letter and resolution were inspired last December when unionists met Magali Llort, mother of Fernando González, at the Fifth International Cuba/Latin America/North America/Mexico Labor Conference in Tijuana, Mexico, sponsored by the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange. While in Cuba, the longshore workers and other English-speaking labor delegations from Ireland, Australia, Britain and the U.S. met with the families of these five heroic Cuban brothers.

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to announce in mid-June whether it will hear the appeal of the Five. This impending decision has spurred plans to intensify labor outreach at upcoming union conventions.

At the recent Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, Latin American and Caribbean nations called for an end to the U.S. blockade against Cuba. The ILWU has opposed trade sanctions against Cuba, policies that punish workers and their families and ultimately aggravate international peace. It is good for workers to meet with workers. □

Papua New Guinea's Indigenous people v. Barrick Gold

By John Catalinotto

"You're sitting on a gold mine" is supposed to mean you have a great opportunity to become really wealthy.

The Indigenous Ipili people of the highland Enga Province of Papua New Guinea have literally been sitting on a gold mine for millennia. But instead of bringing wealth, the mine in the Porgera River region has been a curse.

Jethro Tulin, a leading Papua New Guinea trade unionist and Indigenous leader, says the gold mine sucking that mineral wealth out of Porgera has destroyed his people's ancient subsistence farming community and brought nothing worthwhile in return. Tulin was in New York this May attending a United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He spoke for the Akali Tange Association, which represents around 10,000 Indigenous "landowners" in the mine area.

Two decades ago, Tulin became the first secretary general of the Mine and Allied Workers Union, which at that time represented as many as 3,000 miners and construction workers at the Porgera mine.

Despite Porgera's remote location, its story is familiar. From Dakota's Black Hills to the Western Shoshone to the Pascua-Lama project on the Chile-Argentina border, brutal exploitation of Indigenous peoples and their lands by transnational corporations is notorious.

Papua New Guinea consists of the eastern half of New Guinea, the second-largest island in the world, plus some smaller islands. The western half is part of Indonesia. Papua New Guinea's 6.4 million people live on a territory larger than California. With about 1,000 ethnic groups and more than 800 languages, few lands are more diverse.

Dutch, German and British imperialism have had their presence on the island. After World War I Papua New Guinea became an Australian "protectorate" and remained so until it became nominally independent in 1975.

"We have had contact with the rest of the world for only the last 70 years," Tulin told Workers World. "The first Europeans reached the Porgera valley in the 1930s. That's when we learned to pan for gold in the Porgera River to supplement income beyond subsistence farming and pig-raising.

"We are organized by family, clan, tribe, etc., with land property passed down to the children. Papua New Guinea law officially recognizes these land holdings—although there are no written titles. But the government put in some 'small print' in that law: the people own only the first six feet below the surface of the land. That means the government can lease mining rights for below six feet to transnational companies.

"The Porgera mine was leased first to the Placer Dome Corp., which was in turn taken over by Barrick, also a Canada-based mining corporation that is the largest miner of gold in the world. There are a number of ancestral villages within the mine area, which covers some nine square miles of land."

Barrick shoots people for 'stealing' gold

"Our organization is demanding a fair relocation process for the residents. We want Barrick to repair the damage to the environment. We want reparations to compensate for those who have been killed or injured by the mine's security force.

"According to the agreement and by international law, the mining company is responsible for the costs of voluntarily resettling the people. Instead, the mine management allowed the people to stay on the land in the open-pit mine area. The waste tailings from the gold mine, dumped directly into the water from the mill, have ruined the farming in the area and made much of the population unable to survive on farming alone.

"Adding to the impoverishment," Tulin continued, "Barrick uses force to stop the local people from finding small amounts of gold, as they did before the mine was built. Barrick's security force, recruited from outside the district, has shot and killed people who, the cops say, are 'stealing' Barrick's gold when they scoop up the ore on the edges of the pits—it's no longer possible to pan the polluted river.

PHOTO: AKALI TANGE ASSOCIATION

Above, police, acting for Barrick, set hundreds of Porgera, Papua New Guinea, homes on fire April 27.

Left, Jethro Tulin, leader of Ipili community in Papua New Guinea, shows location of Barrick's gold mine.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

"The company says that its lease means the locals are 'trespassing' and the mine 'owns' the gold. The security force, besides killing five people in the past year alone, has raped women in the area."

Amnesty International, in a report criticizing Barrick, points out that in 2008 Barrick mined 627,000 ounces of gold at Porgera, which that year was worth more than half a billion dollars. Since limestone, water and gas for electricity are all nearby, production costs are low at the mine, and the profits leave more than enough to buy influence in any country.

"To show the relationship between the transnational mining corporation and the Papua New Guinea and regional governments, consider this: mine security will bring the person they shot to the nearby hospital, but mine management will prevent the local and Papua New Guinea police homicide squad from investigating on mine land," Tulin said.

Besides the U.N. meeting, Tulin was also in North America to attend and shake up the shareholders' meeting of Barrick in Toronto at the end of April. There, holding a proxy that gave him a voice, for the second year in a row he read a series of demands on this giant gold-mining corporation, which owns 27 mines and development projects in Canada, the U.S., Chile, South Africa, Australia, Peru and Russia.

Tulin told Barrick's management at the April 29 meeting: "The toxic waste you continue to dump into our 800-kilometer-long river system—which would be illegal in Canada—has caused the Norwegian government to divest its pension fund from more than 230 million Canadian dollars worth of shares in Barrick Gold and to report that its decision was based on its 'assessment that investing in the company entails an unacceptable risk of the Fund contributing to serious environmental damage.'"

While Tulin was in Canada, the Papua New Guinea government launched an assault on his people in Porgera under the name of "Operation Ipili 2009." Using the pretext of "eliminating illegal miners," that is, people who scavenge gold particles, Papua New Guinea police burned over 200 homes in the village of Ungima alone.

"Now, under the influence of your company," Tulin continued, "the Papua New Guinea government has imposed a virtual State of Emergency in Porgera. When I came to Canada last week I received reports from Porgera that landowners who have spoken out against your mine are now being targeted. This week, and while I am standing here before you, their houses are being burnt down and they are fleeing for fear of their life," he told the company officials. (protestbarrick.net)

"The government's priority," Tulin said to WW, "should be to protect the interest of the people, but instead it is protecting the interest of those who come in with money and who are destroying the traditional way of life. We are getting no benefit from development."

Tulin is also exploring the possibility of bringing a civil suit within U.S. courts against Barrick, which has an office in New York and a mine in Nevada. The latter is being protested by the Great Basin Resource Watch and the Western Shoshone people. U.S. laws allow such a suit, while Canadian laws don't. His group has support from environmental and Indigenous organizations in the U.S. and Canada.

Sergio Campusano, president of the Diaguita Huascoaltinos Indigenous people in Chile, was also at Barrick Gold's annual meeting in Toronto protesting the damage to the environment the Pascua Lama mine is causing in that region, including the removal of most of three glaciers that feed fresh-water rivers.

Struggle in Bougainville

A struggle by the people of Bougainville Island, part of Papua New Guinea but now with an autonomous government, against the Rio Tinto mining company led to a decade-long independence war and 15,000 deaths. The struggle ended in a defeat for Rio Tinto, the Papua New Guinea central government and the Australian overlords. Rio Tinto was driven out of Bougainville, but the mining company never paid the reparations the people deserved.

Claims against Rio Tinto are still in U.S. federal court, after the company's legal maneuvers delayed the original suit.

Tulin has said he would like to win the peoples' just demands without the same heavy casualty rate and with Barrick staying long enough to pay its debt to the Ipili and other peoples.

The recent aggression by the central government and police against the population of Porgera has begun to awaken worldwide solidarity with the Ipili and other people of Papua New Guinea's Enga province, whose struggle to survive is part of the overall battle against world imperialism and its threats against peace, environment and the world itself.

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Workers' delegation from

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Cuban workers and poor.

In 1961, responding to the U.S. blockade, Che Guevara urged Cuban workers to use their creativity to make their own tools and parts that could no longer be imported. That, Suárez said, was the birth of ANIR. Mobilizing worker creativity through ANIR and an economy based on providing for basic human needs, not profit, has thwarted the effects of the U.S. economic aggression for fifty years.

The new unfolding global capitalist crash is hitting U.S. port workers hard. During the meeting with Marchante, past ILWU International President Dave Arian said, "Two years ago casual longshore workers earned $45,000 per year. Today the 10,000 casuals are unemployed. No opportunity to work, no retraining, no job opportunity. They can't afford their houses. ... This is just a small example of what is taking place across the U.S.

"When you go to Detroit the official unemployment is 23 percent, really more like 40 percent. ... We are talking about a movement that will ensure the ordinary worker what is already guaranteed in Cuba—housing, food, health care and education. You have already achieved that. What seemed ideological to others is now practical."

In addition to the U.S. blockade and the global economic crisis, Cuba suffered three terrible hurricanes last year that destroyed more than 500,000 homes. Marchante acknowledged the international solidarity and assistance received. He said, "The first thing the government tried to insure was the living conditions of

Nepal elects new PM, reactionaries organize to defeat revolution

By David Hoskins

Nepal swore in a new prime minister on May 25, three weeks after the resignation of Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda from the post. Prachanda's resignation followed attempts by the armed forces, the Nepali Congress, and India to topple the revolutionary government.

The new prime minister is United Marxist Leninist leader Madhav Kumar Nepal. The UML, despite its militant-sounding name and support from a section of the left, maintains strong ties to the old feudal ruling class and to an imperialist-dependent comprador capitalist class. The UML has oscillated between reform and reaction throughout its history and has a long record of betrayal of popular causes.

The UML first failed to deliver on the promise of land reform when it led a minority government after the 1994 elections. More recently, it deserted the Maoist-led coalition government prior to Prachanda's resignation. The potential for revolutionary progress under the new UML-led government is further diminished by the party's current alliance with the Nepali Congress, which, like its namesake in India, is a bourgeois, pro-imperialist party.

New government an attempt to brake revolution

The UML-led government is essentially a concession to the interests of Indian expansionism and U.S. imperialism as Nepal's right-wing attempts to halt the revolutionary process in that country.

Prachanda's party, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, is the largest and most popular party in Nepal. From the launching of the historic armed struggle in 1996 to the party's first-place victory in the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, the UCPN-M has consistently fought for and won over to its side the masses of workers and peasants.

Despite the difficulty of taking state power in a small landlocked country like Nepal, the UCPN-M was able to push the revolution forward during its eight-month term as the leading party in government. An analysis of the political situation in Nepal in May by the UCPN-M shows that the achievements during this period were both great gains for the masses and sources of contention for the reactionaries.

By the time Prachanda resigned, the revolutionary government had already made free basic health care a right, doubled the wages of workers, cancelled the debts of small farmers, launched a mass literacy campaign, and reintroduced agricultural inputs subsidies that the IMF and World Bank had previously eliminated.

These popular actions incurred the wrath of foreign aid donors, the feudal ruling class, the comprador bourgeoisie, moneylenders, and all who sought to profit off the suffering and exploitation of the country's masses.

The UCPN-M had also advanced negotiations for a treaty with China that would increase Nepal-China ties and bring into balance Nepal's relationship with China to the north and India to the south. The revolutionary government also pushed to complete the integration of the revolutionary People's Liberation Army with the Nepal Army as the peace accord mandates. India and the United States were clearly opposed to both the friendship with China and to anything that would weaken the old state army.

These reactionary domestic and international forces rallied against the Maoist-led government. The immediate result of this right-wing backlash was Prachanda's resignation from government, and the formation of a new regime under the UML. The UML-led government has already reversed many of the decisions made under Prachanda.

UCPN-M mobilizes masses in the streets

The Maoists' resignation from government has sharpened the political struggle in Nepal. Prachanda recently spoke at the founding conference of an organization for those injured or disabled during the people's war. At this conference the Maoist leader encouraged party workers to prepare for the further advancement of revolution. Prachanda stressed that the war has only entered a new, unfinished phase.

The UCPN-M has appealed directly to its base of workers and poor peasants in the streets. The UCPN-M Central Secretariat has announced a new round of nationwide protests. The revolutionaries are mobilizing their party and affiliated organizations for mass demonstrations in all 75 districts throughout Nepal. Fresh protests on the floor of the Constituent Assembly will supplement the street mobilizations.

The Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Peasants' Organization-Revolutionary recently seized the property of the deceased former leader of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party. The RPP is an extreme right-wing royalist party tied to many of the atrocities carried out during the absolute rule of the deposed monarch, Gyanendra.

The revolutionary peasants have occupied the former RPP leader's 12-acre estate and ancestral house. The peasants have warned his family that severe action will be taken if the land is sold from underneath them.

The recent actions by the UCPN-M illustrate the revolution's strong base of support among the masses and offers hope for the further advancement of revolution from outside the government. The developments in Nepal illustrate the difference between leading the government—which the UCPN-M did for eight months—and wielding the state power necessary to fully protect the revolution's victories—something still to be determined by the struggle. □

Interest in Marxism grows as Japan veers toward depression

By David Hoskins

Economic indicators released in late May show that Japan may be heading toward an official depression as its economy contracts at a record rate. Growth in worker class-consciousness and combativeness has accompanied the economic news.

Japan's gross domestic product plunged a record 4 percent in the first quarter of 2009 from the previous three-month period for a 9.7 percent decline from a year earlier. Many economists define a depression as a decline in GDP that exceeds 10 percent or a recession that lasts longer than three years. Japan's economy is perilously close to falling into a depression by those standards.

A collapse in exports and cuts in consumer and business spending drove the GDP figures sharply downward. Capital investment declined 10.4 percent from the previous quarter as exports tumbled by 26 percent. Household consumption dropped 1.1 percent in the same quarter.

The specter of deflation, a symptom of a severe economic crisis that then contributes to extending that crisis, has reemerged along with the record GDP drop. The domestic demand deflator, which measures price changes for the domestic economy, fell back into negative territory for the first time in two years.

This, along with a noticeable March decline in consumer prices, has pushed the Japanese economy to the brink of another deflationary crisis. Deflation hindered economic growth in the late 1990s, contributing to that decade's reputation as the "lost decade." Its reemergence could threaten any chance of recovery for the Japanese economy.

Japan has the world's second largest national economy after the United States. Many bourgeois economists said they considered Japan relatively immune to the current economic crisis. The recent developments in Asia's most powerful capitalist economy call into question the overly optimistic forecasts that the global economic crisis is starting to recede.

In most countries a decline of this sort would require an examination of the unemployment rate to determine the full economic impact on the workers. Japan's official unemployment rate crept up slightly to a four-year high of 4.8 percent. While this figure looks good by U.S. standards, it hides the true impact of the crisis on Japan's working class because Japan, like many other capitalist countries, uses deception to mask true unemployment.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Japan employs large numbers of women as temporary or casual workers. Temporary workers bear the brunt of recessions in Japan. The women workers are encouraged to withdraw entirely from the labor market after losing their jobs. It is estimated that temporary and contract workers make up a third of Japan's workforce.

Nearly all full-time workers with permanent labor contracts—predominantly men in large Japanese enterprises—kept their jobs until recently, but with sharply reduced wages, benefits and paid overtime. Thus Japan masks the true impact of its looming depression on the working class by keeping official unemployment rates low.

The severity of the current crisis has caused export-dependent automotive and technology companies such as Toyota, Hitachi and Sony to severely cut workers along with production and wages. This trend has put the job security of even full-time, permanent workers at risk.

Whatever the official unemployment rate suggests, Japan's workers have experienced a rapid process of radicalization as class-consciousness surges amid the crisis.

The Japanese Communist Party has been the main beneficiary of the increased fighting spirit of workers and students. The JCP, despite its name, is more like a social-democratic than a revolutionary party, but many see it as strongly pro-worker. More than 14,000 people have joined the JCP since the beginning of 2008, a quarter of them youth. The party continues to grow at a pace of 1,000 new members a month, and readership of its Red Flag daily newspaper has surpassed 1.6 million.

A JCP-organized May Day rally in Tokyo drew a surprisingly large crowd of 36,000 demonstrators. A recent protest of corporate headquarters just outside Tokyo's upscale shopping district brought hundreds into the streets. The crowd included laid-off workers and those demonstrating in favor of rights for temporary workers.

Temporary workers are generally excluded from joining the country's main labor unions. Many temporary workers belong to small independent unions affiliated with the JCP.

Evidence of radicalization surpasses JCP membership statistics. A manga comic version of Karl Marx's "Capital" is now a best-seller. The 1929 classic work "The Crab-Canning Ship" by communist author Takiji Kobayashi has emerged as a popular graphic novel. The book, and its modern graphic novel adaptation, offers a grim depiction of worker exploitation as crab fishermen try to survive on poverty wages.

The renewed interest in Marxist classics and JCP growth indicate that even in the world's second largest imperialist economy workers still turn to the idea of Marxism for solutions to the way out of capitalist crisis. □

U.S. sees Cuba advances

the people affected. When you visit those areas—where nothing was left standing after winds of 200 miles per hour in Pinar Del Río—now the hardest hit area is completely rebuilt. It is with pain that we Cubans saw what happened in New Orleans and the response of the U.S. government."

As representatives of U.S. workers, we thanked Cuba for its offer of more than 1,500 fully equipped doctors and other emergency medical specialists to save lives in New Orleans in 2005, an offer the Bush administration rejected.

A timely visit

The visit to Cuba was most timely. Just a few weeks ago Congresswoman Barbara Lee led a delegation of the Congressional Black Caucus members, which included Congresswoman Laura Richardson of southern California, and met with President Raúl Castro and former president and revolutionary leader Fidel Castro. President Obama is allowing Cuban Americans to make unlimited transfers of money and visits to relatives in Cuba.

Arian observed, "The workers of Cuba based on the political and economic system and the blockade have substituted what is available in Cuba for material things. We saw kids playing outside in the streets and parks, soccer, baseball; we saw young people, music, culture; we saw free medical care. We did not see homelessness, we did not see hunger, and we did not see crime. Cuba is a totally different culture."

Who best to speak for workers but workers themselves? This is exactly what occurred on our visit to Cuba. □

workers world editorial

Another first with Sotomayor

On May 26, President Barack Obama nominated federal judge Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court. In this historic move, she became the first member of the Latina/o community to be named to the high court in its 220-year history, and only the third woman.

Given all the attempts by the ruling class in this country to drive a wedge between the Black and Latina/o communities, it is noteworthy that it took the first African-American president to break with both racist and sexist tradition and nominate a Latina to the high court.

However, Judge Sotomayor's name was barely spoken when the right-wing vitriol began. The same reactionary forces who attacked the historic election of Obama have now aimed their fire at her.

Predictably, diehard right-wingers like Rush Limbaugh, Newt Gingrich and Tom Tancredo have attacked her as a woman and for her Puerto Rican heritage. They have assailed her past affiliation with highly respected civil rights organizations that have advocated for the Latina/o community and fought for affirmative action, including the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (now LatinoJustice PRLDF) and the National Council of La Raza.

The far right, who have so many ways of getting their views into the corporate media, are looking to whip up a racist, anti-woman reaction in the population. So far, that has not worked, according to a recent Associated Press poll showing Sotomayor with more popular support than any of George W. Bush's nominees.

Nevertheless, her attackers persist in trying to find arguments that could rope in the more "moderate" capitalist politicians and get them to vote against her nomination.

Because of Sotomayor's long-time history of support and activism for affirmative action policies for women and people of color, as a student and then in her professional career, the outrageous and phony charge of "reverse racism" has been leveled against her.

Every word she has ever said or written is under scrutiny. They are zeroing in on the claim that she has shown "empathy" and therefore cannot be "objective." She's been assailed for having "identity" politics because of a statement she made in 2001 when she talked honestly about how judges are influenced by their genders and national origins. She said then, "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life."

She was only stating the obvious fact: when the court was all-white and all-male, it voted time and again to uphold race and sex discrimination.

The Supreme Court, of course, has never been "objective." Its decisions have generally favored the dominant class in this oppressive capitalist system. When slavery was most profitable in the South, the court found reasons to justify its existence. When the railroads wanted to expand into the West, the court ratified their land grabs from Native peoples.

Just in the last few years, the court's majority has ruled to protect corporations, denied working women equal pay and pensions, curtailed the right to legal counsel that mainly affects poor people, and denied death penalty appeals. Sotomayor, by contrast, advised against the use of capital punishment, as it's associated with racism. The majority of those on death row in the U.S. are people of color.

The archconservative justices on the court are even threatening to undo portions of the monumental Voting Rights Act. They have made it clear that they don't intend to remedy class, racial or gender injustices.

If Sotomayor is confirmed after such a strong attack on affirmative action in Congress and in the corporate media, there is no guarantee how she will vote on all issues. However, her accession to the court will be a historic advance for the democratic rights of all women and Latinas/os. □

MUNDO OBRERO

San Diego denuncia las deportaciones

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más tarde ese mismo día en el Downtown Transit Center fue anunciado en la conferencia de prensa. Organizado por la Coalición Derechos de la Raza y presidida por Adriana Jasso, varios centenares de personas, mayormente juventud latina quienes gritaban consignas a viva voz entre las presentaciones de los/as oradores/as, se reunieron en la isleta de tránsito frente al congestionado centro de tránsito.

La energética demostración llamó la atención y el apoyo de trabajadores/as que iban en camino a su casa y de una cantidad de personas desamparadas que asentían con entusiasmo cuando los/as presentadores/as denunciaban las redadas y demandaban apoyo del gobierno para la educación y otras necesidades humanas en vez de represión y racismo.

Un momento solemne de silencio al final de la demostración fue llamado por el líder de Derechos de la Raza Christian Ramírez para pagar tributo al activista por los derechos humanos Roberto Martinez quien murió recientemente a los 72 años. En una declaración escrita, Ramírez recordó a su amigo y maestro de muchos años: "Con una voz suave pero con un espíritu indomable, Roberto Martínez habló la verdad acerca del poder frente a la violencia fomentada por las políticas gubernamentales. El fue ejemplo con integridad y compasión de la causa por la defensa de los derechos humanos a pesar del hostigamiento de la policía y las amenazas de muerte, nunca sucumbió a las presiones de aquellos en el poder. Su determinación en la lucha por la justicia, la paz y la dignidad es el legado que él nos deja y que nosotros esperamos continuar". Martínez recibió muchos honores y el amor de la comunidad por sus años de dedicación a la lucha por su pueblo. □

End U.S.-backed campaign against Tamil people

F.I.S.T. STATEMENT

The following excerpted statement was issued by the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together. Visit www.fistyouth.org.

FIST calls for the immediate end to the U.S.-supported campaign against the Tamil population of Sri Lanka and stands in solidarity with the struggle of the Tamil people for liberation.

The strife between the primarily Sinhalese ruling class and the Tamils is not a struggle between ancient religious forces. It is a struggle of class and for liberation of an oppressed nationality.

About a million Tamils were forcibly brought to the land presently known as Sri Lanka from Tamil Nadu, a state in the southern tip of India. British imperialists used the Tamil people as indentured slaves in the country's tea plantations. In 1948, when British imperialists lost control of Southeast Asia, they handed the country to the Sinhalese majority. The Sinhalese continued their chauvinist tactics, making Sinhalese the only official language and restricting access to resources and services, such as health care, schools, civil service and political participation

The Western capitalist media depict Tamil suicide bombers as terrorists who kill civilians. However, they fail to report on the horrible atrocities and conditions that forced the Tamil people into armed struggle to defend themselves.

The U.S. government has provided the Sri Lankan army with napalm, white phosphorus, cluster bombs, artillery shells and other weapons along with satellite technology and other military aid. Without the aid of the U.S., this genocide would not have been possible. The United Nations estimated that 60 Tamils were being slaughtered per day inside a "no-fire" zone alone. The Times of London reported that the Sri Lankan Army killed more than 20,000 Tamil civilians in the last weeks of its offensive. Independent journalists, human rights monitors and international aid groups have been banned from Tamil villages in the northern part of the country.

On May 2, one day after the military declared that their troops had cornered Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels, the Sri Lankan Army fired artillery shells on the only remaining hospital at Mu'l'livaaykkaal, a Tamil village. At least 64 civilians were killed, and 87 were wounded. Yet this was not reported on by the mainstream Western media.

On May 18, the Tigers' leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was reportedly killed by the Sri Lankan army. Sinhalese mobs paraded through the streets of Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, and through Tamil villages claiming victory while harassing and humiliating Tamils in the streets.

FIST supports the right to self-determination of the Tamil people and calls for an end to U.S. intervention in Sri Lanka. We demand that Tamil refugees be permitted to return to their lands; that the Sinhalese ruling class immediately cease the genocide of Tamils; that reparations be paid to the impoverished Tamil community of Sri Lanka for the years of imperialist intervention; that the U.S. cease the supplying of illegal weapons to aid ethnic cleansing efforts in Sri Lanka; and that there be no further imperialist intervention by the U.S. or Indian governments. □

Women vow to defeat anti-choice terror

Continued from page 1

two others in Wichita endured a seven-week siege by rabid followers of Operation Rescue. In 1993 Dr. Tiller was shot in both hands by an "Army of God" adherent.

Not only has his family been followed and his church picketed, but Dr. Tiller has been legally harassed by state officials. In March he was acquitted in a jury trial of charges of violating Kansas regulations governing abortions. But that didn't stop Fox's Bill O'Reilly from mercilessly vilifying him.

Although some anti-choice groups disavowed the murder, their statements ring hollow. "Operation Rescue, the American Life League and other anti-abortion groups should be ashamed of themselves for pretending to be against violence when their rhetoric ramps up harassment, hatred and violence," Eleanor J. Bader, co-author of "Targets of Hatred: Anti-Abortion Terrorism," told Workers World.

On June 1, Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry said Dr. Tiller "reaped what he sowed" and declared, "I won't tone down the rhetoric." He added that Operation Rescue and other groups were not responsible for Dr. Tiller's murder. (huffingtonpost.com)

But Dr. Warren Hern, one of the other providers of midpregnancy abortions, disagrees: "Dr. Tiller's assassination is not the lone and inexplicable action of one deranged killer. This was a political assassination in a historic pattern of anti-abortion violence. It was terrorism." (wibw.com, June 1)

"All previous deaths [of abortion providers] occurred under Clinton," added Bader, "and it seems clear that when an administration perceived to be friendly to reproductive justice is in office, the antis become frustrated and some act out on their frustration." Among President Obama's pro-choice actions have been ending the global gag rule and nominating Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sibelius, a supporter of Dr. Tiller, to head the Department of Health and Human Services.

Scott Roeder, who was arrested May 31 and charged with first-degree murder for Tiller's death, fits the profile of anti-abortion assassins. Not only does he have a history of violence and anti-choice activity, but, according to wibw.com, a 38-year-old man named Scott Roeder was charged in 1996 in Topeka with criminal use of explosives. The FBI identified him as a member of the ultraright Freemen group, which held off the FBI in Montana for almost three months in 1995-96.

The connection between anti-choice zealots and groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis is well-documented. Though the murder of Dr. Tiller was calculated to intimidate the reproductive rights movement, it has had the opposite effect. Not only has Dr. Tiller's clinic, Women's Health Care Services, vowed to continue to work in his name, but activists all over the country are rolling up their sleeves.

"We have to step up our efforts to fight for reproductive justice on behalf of all women," Debbie Johnson, co-chair of DANFORR, the Detroit Action Network For Reproductive Rights, told Workers World. "We here in Detroit are at ground zero in the economic crisis, and we won't let reactionary forces deter us on the road to economic and social change. Only a massive, united, multinational mobilization, which includes the demand for reproductive justice, can push the rightwing back as we fight for the rights of all working and oppressed people." □

Nigeria gov't siege traps Niger Delta's people

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

An ongoing struggle between Nigeria's federal government and the people of the Niger Delta has reached a new level in the aftermath of the May 13 military operation in the West African oil-producing region.

The root of the current repression in Nigeria is the role of U.S. and European-based multinational oil firms that have looted the resources of the people of the oil-producing areas inside the country for decades. These corporations, working in conjunction with capitalist politicians running the federal government, have sought to maximize profits and deny the fundamental political, economic and human rights of the people of the Niger Delta.

Fighting for the rights of the people, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta has carried out acts of sabotage and kidnapping over the last several years. MEND is protesting the exploitation of the natural resources in the area and the failure of the government and the multinational oil firms to utilize industry profits to improve the people's living conditions.

A May 28 report stated that a leading activist in Bayelsa State, Ken Niweigha, was shot dead by the police. Although the police claim that Niweigha, known as "Daddy Ken," was killed in a shootout, MEND announced in a statement that the authorities executed him.

Nigerian human rights groups have repeatedly claimed that state-sponsored executions are "shockingly common" inside the country. Niweigha, who led the Egbesu Boys, which is affiliated with MEND, was arrested on May 26 and paraded before journalists.

According to Police Commissioner Onouha Udeka, "He [Niweigha] promised he was going to take us to his hideout in Odi where he hid his weapons. But we did not know that he had arranged with his gang to attack us and possibly get him freed. Ken was shot trying to escape." (BBC, May 28)

Ken Niweigha was the only person reportedly killed during the alleged shootout. A spokesman for MEND accused the Nigerian police of "summarily executing" Niweigha.

"The Nigerian government in authorizing extrajudicial killings is sending a clear message to youths from the region that it is better to die fighting for freedom than be killed by a lawless system of government," said Jomo Gbomo in an e-mail statement to the international press. (BBC, May 28)

According to the BBC, 500 women from Odi requested that something be done to prevent fleeing MEND supporters from taking refuge in the town. It is quite rare for people to turn in MEND activists, however. In this case residents of the town remember the attacks carried out in 1999 after the killing of 12 policemen, which resulted in the deaths of at least 50 people at the hands of the military.

And women have been especially active in this struggle. In 2001 the heroic Nigerian women inspired women everywhere when they took over several Chevron-Texaco installations and demanded reparations in the form of jobs, health care and economic development.

The Nigerian Joint Task Force (JTF) is carrying out the current military offensive, which has resulted in hundreds of people taking up residence in the Ogbe Ijoh refugee camp.

"The chaos at the Ogbe Ijoh refugee camp was unmistakable. With very little to eat or drink, already traumatized mothers struggled to calm their starving babies. Several of them half-naked and crammed into a primary school building with poor sanitation, with the bare floor for a sleeping space and at the mercy of mosquitoes, desperate women painted a harrowing picture of army attacks on their settlements and their plight at the Ogbe Ijoh camp." (VOA, May 24)

One of those taking refuge at the camp was Esther Clark, a local chief from Gbaramatu. She said, "They brought some food which cannot even take care of one village in our community. Nobody has eaten since morning. It is about 11 o'clock, all the children, nobody has eaten. We have not seen anything. I was in Opkoroza when the thing happened. I was one of the chiefs in the village. I have never seen a place where the federal government will bring a bombing plane to a community and begin to drop bombs on top of the people. I have never heard it anywhere in Nigeria before." (VOA, May 24)

Government expands offensive

On June 1, the Joint Task Force announced that it would expand the offensive against opposition forces from Delta State to Rivers State. The military said that it eliminated a militant camp near Buguma creek following a fierce firefight. Despite media claims that a ceasefire agreement may be in the works between MEND and the federal government, the armed opposition alliance denied these reports and pledged to continue attacks on oil installations even if offers are made to employ more locals in the industry.

Nigerian military official Col. Rabe Abubakar said that the JTF had no choice but to extend the scope of its operations in the region, claiming that the opposition were "criminals" and that "we will locate them wherever they are hiding. They can only run but they can't hide." (Nigerian Guardian, June 1)

Nonetheless, MEND spokesperson Jomo Gbomo denied reports of a JTF attack in Buguma. "We can only say at this time that this is a public relations stunt as no serious camp has reported any attacks on them," Gbomo said.

President Umara Musa Yar'Adua, as well as the so-called Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), which consists of elite social groups from the northern region of the country, have authorized the offensive by the JTF. (Nigerian Guardian, May 29)

However, other groups, such as the All Niger Peoples Assembly, have condemned the attacks and called for an immediate ceasefire by the military. In a statement issued by the Assembly, which constitutes the regional organizations representing the affected areas, the group expressed dismay at the "unconscionable attempt to institutionalize genocide in the Niger Delta, as evidenced by the House of Representatives passing a resolution which callously implores the Federal Government to extend the carnage in Delta State to Rivers and Bayelsa states, plus the condemnable call for the extermination of the 20 million Niger Deltans by Representative Bala Ibn N'Allah of Kebbi State." (Nigerian Guardian, May 29)

Source of the conflict: oil grab

According to the Energy Information Administration of the U.S. government, "In 2008, Nigerian crude oil production averaged 1.94 million bbl/d [barrels per day], making it the largest crude oil producer in Africa. If current shut-in capacity were to be back online, EIA estimates that Nigerian production could have reached 2.7 million bbl/d in 2008.

Nigerian women fight for the benefits from their petroleum in 2002.

As a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria has agreed to abide by allotted crude production limits that have varied over the years. These limits do not appear to have had as great an impact on production volumes or investment decisions as unrest in the Niger Delta has.

"The major foreign producers in Nigeria are Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Total and Eni/Agip. Recent developments in the upstream sector include the start up of the Chevron-operated Agbami field in September 2008, with expected peak production of 250,000 bbl/d by the end of 2009." (AEIA)

Consequently, the people of Nigeria must build a nationwide alliance to take control of its oil resources, which account for 95 percent of the country's foreign exchange reserves. MEND and other regional groups must be supported by the Nigerian Labor Congress and other organizations throughout the country that are desirous of a new social order independent of U.S. and European imperialism. □

Justice for Robert Mitchell!

Why we need a People's Summit

Continued from page 4

ful campaign to ban the use of tasers by Detroit police.

In a statement issued by the DCAPB, the organization called for "the establishment of a Warren-Detroit peace zone; the immediate suspension of taser use by law enforcement; and the prosecution of the officers involved in Mitchell's murder."

The family of Robert Mitchell has filed a wrongful-death civil lawsuit against the City of Warren. "This is a blessing," said Cora Mitchell of the outcome of the demonstration. "We need to start to take back our communities."

Repression & the economic crisis

Robert Mitchell's tragic death at the hands of police is not an isolated incident. All across the U.S., more people, African Americans and Latinos/as in particular, have become victims of police violence. And then there is economic violence.

In a May 20 article in the Frost newspaper in Fort Wayne, Ind., James W. Breedlove, former president of the NAACP in that city, wrote: "Many American blacks today are already experiencing a silent economic depression that, in terms of unemployment, approaches the disastrous levels of 80 years ago. Almost 12 percent of blacks are unemployed; this is expected to increase to nearly 20 percent by 2010. Among young black males aged 16 through 19, the unemployment rate is 32.8 percent, while their white counterparts are at 18.3 percent. Overall, 24 percent of blacks are in poverty, versus eight percent of whites."

As it relates to the economic stimulus policies of the Obama administration, Breedlove noted: "As millions of people seek aid—many for the first time—they are finding it dispensed through a maze of disconnected programs that reach some and reject others as program officials attempt to follow conflicting state rules and regulations that deemphasize need. The result is a hit-or-miss system of relief that was not designed to deal with the severity of a recession that cuts so deep."

Over the last 18 months over 4 million people have lost their jobs. By the end of 2009 another three million will be rendered unemployed. At the same time it is estimated that over two million households will go into foreclosure by the end of 2009. All of this is happening after massive government programs that have given $10 trillion to Wall Street bankers and multinational corporations such as AIG.

Despite the Housing and Economic Recovery Act, TARP, and the economic stimulus bill passed in February, overall economic indicators remain down. The stimulus package has not made a dent in the rising unemployment and foreclosure figures.

Necessity of a people's movement

Since 2006, millions of voters in the U.S. have expressed their repudiation of the neoconservative policies of permanent war and large-scale transfers of wealth to the rich. However, domestic and foreign policies have not fundamentally changed. The economic crisis is deepening at a very rapid rate while at the same time the wars of occupation against Iraq and Afghanistan continue unabated.

A whole new front in "the war on terrorism" has been opened up in Pakistan, where a U.S.-backed offensive in the Swat Valley has resulted in the displacement of 2 million people. The corporate and military interests that control the mass media in the U.S. refuse to allow a real debate around economic and military policy.

The $700 billion annual war budget is a drain on the economy as a direct result of its unproductive character. The fallacy that the purported "war on terror" is necessary flies in the face of reality. The greatest threat to the well-being of the people in the U.S. and the world stems from the military and economic policies emanating from Wall Street and Washington.

It is these policies that have rendered tens of millions of workers unemployed, underemployed and impoverished.

This is why the June 14-17 People's Summit and Tent City in Detroit is critical in the efforts aimed at developing an effective fightback program. The working class and the nationally oppressed need their own independent movements that can advance and defend the people's own interests. This event will provide those most affected by the economic crisis with their best hope for protracted and concrete struggle to better their conditions. □

MANDO OBRERO

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Mitin en San Diego denuncia las deportaciones de estudiantes

Por Bob McCubbin
San Diego, California

El 20 de mayo a las 6:20 de la mañana un número de pasajeros/as en el trasporte público, incluyendo a estudiantes en camino a la escuela, fueron detenidos/as e interrogados/as por la Patrulla Fronteriza, y oficiales de la Administración para la Seguridad del Tránsito (TSA por las siglas en inglés) en la estación Old Town en San Diego.

En un descarado acto de racismo, personas con apariencia latina fueron seleccionadas y se les pidió sus documentos de ciudadanía. Veintiuna personas fueron arrestadas, esposadas y rápidamente deportadas, incluyendo a tres estudiantes menores de 18 años.

La activista y maestra de una escuela local Dawn Miller, supo de la redada porque una de las personas deportadas estaba en su clase. Ella inmediatamente se comunicó con grupos de apoyo y con la ayuda del U.S./Mexico Border Program del American Friends Service Committee, (AFSC), se organizó dos días después una conferencia de prensa muy concurrida y profundamente emotiva.

En un mensaje por correo electrónico, Miller escribió: "Yo no creo que muchas personas sepan que esto está pasando y tampoco creo que alguien que sepa de este tipo de redada de nuestros/as niños/as, pueda quedarse sin hacer nada. Yo no me quedaré con los brazos cruzados y permitir que los derechos humanos básicos de mis estudiantes sean violados."

En el mismo mensaje Pedro Ríos, director del programa de AFSC dijo: "El tranvía debería ser un lugar seguro para los/as estudiantes y trabajadores/as. No hay justificación alguna para la detención de menores y separarles de sus familias." Agregó que ni la TSA ni los oficiales de la Patrulla Fronteriza han respondido a las llamadas de la AFSC pidiendo una explicación de la operación.

En la conferencia de prensa, además de representantes de los medios, estaban miembros/as de la comunidad, educadores y activistas. Pedro Ríos presidió el evento, el cual se condujo en español e inglés.

La primera ponente fue Angélica Pacheco, cuyo hijo fue uno de los estudiantes deportados. "Mi hijo es un estudiante excelente y una buena persona," dijo, mostrándose orgullosa de él y furiosa por la deportación. Después le siguió Ana María Benítez, quien recibió una llamada de su hija llorando en la mañana del miércoles mientras estaba temporalmente detenida en las oficinas de la Patrulla Fronteriza de San Diego. Benítez recalcó que el transporte público no es seguro. Añadió que otros padres han sufrido la misma injusticia que ella está sufriendo. "Yo quiero que también se pronuncien sobre esto" enfatizó.

Dawn Miller, quien utilizó el Internet para publicar la historia y pasar la voz, mostró gran indignación por las detenciones y deportaciones. "Yo esperaría este tipo de acción de una dictadura fascista," dijo.

David Valladolid, activista por muchos años, residente de California y presidente del Parent Institute for Quality Education, presentó otra fuerte denuncia por la redada: "Queremos a nuestros niños en universidades. No los queremos en cárceles." Manolo Correo de la Casa Michoacana, quien conocía y trabajaba con los/as estudiantes arrestados/as en un programa extraescolar, también se unió a la denuncia.

Kevin Keenan, director ejecutivo del San Diego American Civil Liberties Union, comentando sobre la redada dijo, "Esto hace pensar de si este es el cambio que la administración Obama prometió." Anunció que otros proyectos de la ACLU han sido pospuestos mientras su organización investiga las violaciones a la ley que esta redada representa. Una clara violación es exigir a un/a joven menor de 18 años que compruebe su ciudadanía.

Un mitin de protesta programado para

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En contra del alguacil Arpaio

Detenidos en Arizona en huelga de hambre

Por Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Arizona

Los/as prisioneros/as comenzaron una huelga de hambre el 2 de mayo para protestar las condiciones degradantes e infrahumanas que padecen en las prisiones administradas por el infame alguacil racista del Condado de Maricopa, Joe Arpaio. Los crímenes de Arpaio están muy bien documentados: coloca a los/as prisioneros/as en tiendas de campaña sumamente calientes, les exhibe por las calles de Phoenix como esclavos/as en camino a una subasta pública, les sirve comida podrida conocida por los/as prisioneros/as como "slop", y les niega tratamiento médico. Arpaio ha tratado de fustigar la histeria anti-inmigrante todo lo posible.

La huelga de hambre fue iniciada por mujeres detenidas en la Cárcel la Estrella inmediatamente después de una marcha y demostración de 3000 personas que protestaban en contra de Arpaio. La huelga de hambre se extendió a las cárceles de Durango y de la parte céntrica de la ciudad; aproximadamente 1800 a 2000 prisioneros/as rehusaron comer. Arpaio tomó represalias contra los/as huelguistas confinándoles totalmente a sus celdas, negándoles el derecho a visitas, a llamadas telefónicas y al acceso a la televisión. A pesar de esto, la huelga continuó.

El 20 de mayo la Unión de las Libertades Civiles de América (ACLU por las siglas en inglés), que había sometido una demanda contra Arpaio en julio pasado sobre las condiciones infrahumanas en las cárceles, condenó el cierre total de las cárceles sosteniendo que la huelga de hambre es una forma protegida constitucionalmente de expresarse libremente. La declaración de la ACLU menciona la orden de la corte contra Arpaio en octubre pasado por haber "fallado en proveer comidas con valor nutritivo" a los/as detenidos/as. El 22 de mayo Arpaio levantó la orden de cierre total de la cárcel.

FOTO: PAUL TEITELBAUM

Cerca del 70 por ciento de los/as prisioneros/as en las cárceles del Condado de Maricopa son detenidos/as en espera de juicio; no han sido condenados/as por crimen alguno. Arpaio llena las cárceles en base al perfil racial y conduce redadas armadas en las comunidades latinas. El ha creado su milicia privada conocida como el "posse."

Las mujeres encarceladas a menudo son víctimas de la peor intimidación y brutalidad ejercida por sus carceleros/as. Sylvia Herrera, del Puente Arizona, un grupo comunitario basado en la región de Phoenix y que participó organizando la protesta contra Arpaio el 2 de mayo, detalló dos casos recientes de abuso físico de mujeres en las cárceles de Arpaio.

Guardas penales le rompieron el brazo a una mujer al intentar forzarla firmar un documento de deportación "voluntario". En otra ocasión, una mujer embarazada fue inmediatamente separada de su bebé recién nacido después del parto por cesárea y fue retornada a la cárcel sin recibir el tratamiento médico pos-cesáreo requerido. Herrera dice que estos incidentes se conocen solamente porque las mujeres eventualmente tuvieron que ser trasladadas al hospital.

Hay eventos comunitarios planeados en los barrios alrededor de Phoenix para mostrar solidaridad con los/as encarcelados/as en las prisiones de Arpaio. Los/as activistas dejarán saber que el racismo, la persecución anti-inmigrante, la tortura y el maltrato de los/as detenidos/as no serán permitidos. □

Activistas desafían acciones antiinmigrantes de la policía

Por Gloria Rubac
Houston

Los/as inmigrantes y sus partidarios/as han marchado, manifestado, han montado líneas de piquete, y hasta se han reunido con funcionarios de la administración del alcalde para expresar su oposición a la ejecución de las leyes de inmigración por la policía de Houston.

En una conferencia de prensa y piquete que tuvo lugar el 20 de mayo frente al Sindicato de Oficiales de la Policía de Houston, los/as activistas indicaron que los/as inmigrantes son una gran parte de la población de Houston y que deben ser tratados/as con respeto por todas las agencias de la ciudad.

Gritando, "¿Qué queremos? ¡Derechos civiles! ¿Cuándo los queremos? ¡Ahora!" los/as manifestantes llenaron la acera frente a la oficina central del sindicato de la policía. El presidente del sindicato escribió recientemente un editorial para demandar que el alcalde de Houston Bill White, hiciera más para cumplir con las leyes de inmigración.

Vigilancia Judicial (Judicial Watch), una organización derechista que respalda políticas inmigratorias más estrictas, ha anunciado que demandará a la ciudad de Houston para forzarla a que aumente sus esfuerzas para combatir la inmigración ilegal.

Por 17 años la ciudad de Houston y su policía no han puesto en vigor las leyes inmigratorias. Esa política cambió este año cuando el alcalde White se unió al "programa 287(g)" del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas de los Estados Unidos (ICE), el cual permite que los carceleros/as de la ciudad investiguen sobre la información criminal y situación inmigratoria de la gente que llega a las dos cárceles de la ciudad.

Esta política ha resultado en una reacción contra el alcalde por parte de los/as inmigrantes y sus partidarios/as que luchan contra el programa 287(g) de la Agencia de Inmigración que hace que la fuerza policíaca de Houston sea la única en Tejas que permite la interrogación sobre ciudadanía a gente que no es sospechosa.

La activista pro derechos de los/as inmigrantes María Jiménez dijo que ella y otros/as oponentes del 287(g) se reunieron con los oficiales del alcalde para expresarle sus preocupaciones. Ella dijo que no les aseguraron que alguien que tuviera un delito menor de Clase C, incluyendo violaciones de tránsito, no se incluiría.

"Podría resultar en el encarcelamiento de inmigrantes por ofensas menores," dijo Jiménez. "Lo que esta política haría será incitar a la interrogación de cualquier persona que parece latina sobre si está aquí legalmente."

El jefe del Departamento de la Policía de Houston Harold Hurtt ha dicho que mientras la policía local coopera con los agentes federales, una vez que una persona que no es ciudadana está encarcelada, el Departamento de la Policía de Houston no puede ser responsable por la ejecución de las leyes de inmigración en Houston, una ciudad que tiene una población de 250.000 a medio millón de personas indocumentadas.

Está planeada otra manifestación frente a la oficina del sindicato de la policía el 27 de mayo. Para más información, comuníquese con César Espinoza en el Centro de Recursos Centroamericanos, número de teléfono 713-271-9703. □